

Teaching Is Probably Not My Forte

Another tangents.org blogger, who is also a very good friend of mine, blogs about his (mis)adventures concerning substitute teaching. He has posted a poll or two about what subjects and ages his readers would like to teach if they could choose. I never really took the questions seriously since I could never picture myself in the situation to teach. After all, you need a degree to teach most anything these days, and I stopped college short of a degree to get married, which is one of the best decisions I ever made, no regrets. So I would answer those polls, and I would say I'd like to teach zoology or animal behavior or something like that because I love animals. And I guessed that I would like to teach kids younger than high school, because I was a kid once, and I remember how older kids treat their substitute teachers... But again, until a few weeks ago, I never thought I'd find myself in a position to actually teach a class...

At our family's church, childcare is provided. Over the summer, understandably there are many childcare volunteers who need a break, so they ask parents to volunteer. My husband and I quickly signed up – after all, we have 4 kids in childcare there every week, so it was time to give back. We didn't state an age nor gender preference of our students; we just noted that we didn't want to be in the 4-year-old nor 2-year-old classes since that's where our two daughters are who would have a chance of being clingy with Mom and Dad volunteering in their class. Basically, it was the luck of the draw – and our “luck” dictated that we were to be in the 3rd-5th grade boys class. Ok, no problem. I've seen the tail-end of those Brownies meetings while waiting to pick up my daughter – 9 or 10 tween girls running around; screaming, giggling, gossiping, sometimes somehow doing all 3 of those

things at once... So um, no thanks, boys will be just fine for Sunday school. So I thought...

We got our "lesson plans", and there were not fewer than 10 pages of instructions to follow for our 1 hour and 5 minute class. Well, add-in the arrival games and we were in charge for about an hour and 15 minutes. But I haven't seen time crawl by that slowly since before I had kids; it was the longest hour I've had in a long time! Not that I wasn't having fun, because I was – A LOT of fun, actually. So anyway, all week, my husband and I have been poring over these lesson plans; I was committed to go in there today knowing exactly what I was doing and determined to keep control over those boys.

So we arrive, and the helpful leader tells us to grab snacks for the kids ahead of their arrival, but we don't know how many we'll be expecting, so in her words, "10 should be plenty". We get to the classroom, she explains a few things, and kids begin to arrive. From the beginning, it was clear we were going to have to keep one eye on a rambunctious and mischievous (though intelligent) little boy named Avery. In fact, the very minute after I made a mental note to watch Avery very closely, I looked up and he was *gone*. I had no choice but to leave my poor defenseless husband in the clutches of the growing number of 8-10 year-old-boys while I literally **ran** after the wayward Avery. The Kid's Kingdom building of our church is still somewhat of a maze to me, so it was pure luck that I got out into the hallway just in time to see the back of Avery disappearing through a set of double doors. "I've got you now, sucker" I thought as I ran through the gym after him. I chased him right up to the kids' check-in desk, where I, the newbie, had to explain to the staff person why I was chasing a kid who had escaped from my classroom. Luckily for me, she seemed to know Avery and to be familiar with his escapades, and she was grateful that I had chased him down. Turns out, he had decided to get himself a

name tag (which he is supposed to do *before* class but evidently did not), so he decided to leave the classroom to do so without telling anyone, which of course is a big no-no.

So I collar Avery, and we return to the classroom, and there are now kids everywhere who all had apparently arrived during the chase scene! There was one teeny-tiny little girl who stuck out like a sore thumb in a room full of all boys years older than her, so I went over to her and offered to walk her to the girls' class – and that's how I found out that she was a guest of one of the kids in the class, who turned out to be one of the pastor's sons. Actually, he was the son of the pastor who was our friend before we chose this church, so seeing him was a bit of a relief – for that moment anyway. I thought for sure he would be a nice, helpful boy... but more on that later. We did a head count, and we discovered in our classroom, we had 14 boys + 1 little girl + 2 freshman teachers with 0 experience = fun times ahead!

We played the activity that was slated for play while the kids were arriving, and it was a worksheet where the kids matched words with the fears they represent, like arachnophobia=the fear of spiders, felinaphobia=the fear of cats, etc. It went pretty well, despite disappearing pens (one guess – yes, Avery. Though I countered his pen trick well. When he said that he **ate** the pens, I said, well, you won't be needing snack then, and the pens were automatically recovered). Finally it was time to line up to go to large group.

Once in the large group room, also known as The Wherehouse, our responsibilities diminished as the leader took over and we relished a break of sorts. We got to see a few of the kids act things out, which was neat, and we also got to see our oldest daughter who had come over from her class. Let me tell you, she was a pro at their songs and dances! She just performed them without even giving a glance over to Mom and Dad, which is so the way we wanted it and exactly what we were afraid of when declining to volunteer in any of our kids'

classrooms. But her section of the room was also eerily quiet, and I kind of regretted the decision to stay away from teaching our kids' classrooms as I envied their parent volunteer with her *four* quiet girls versus our *fourteen* borderline obnoxious boys (and one little girl). Large group was uneventful, crisis-wise anyway. I tried some of the dances and my husband made fun of me... but the kids don't want to see some grumpy-looking adult standing there, not having fun, right? My job was to encourage them to participate, and I figured step one would be to participate myself!

So at 11:30, after Large Group, it was time to go back to the classrooms until 12:05. And that's when time began to creep in a way it hasn't for us since our engagement. We began class with one of the suggested games; a relay race involving cups of water. The instructions said it was "great for boys", so without really giving it thought, we learned the rules of that game and one other. The relay involved carrying a cup of water on the back of one's hand down a "balance beam" (tape line on the floor) and back again. This was fun, but as you can imagine, there were more than a few spills. And a note: Avery chose to get himself kicked out of this one – kudos to my husband for putting his foot down! Of course, by then all the boys were getting really rowdy (the pastor's son was one of the tricksters; here I thought he'd be a big help), so we shut the door and passed out the snack. But if you remember, earlier I said that we had only brought 10 snacks to the classroom, which "should be plenty" but alas, were not nearly enough for 15 hungry kids. Luckily, there were other snacks leftover from the previous session, and we didn't bother letting them choose which of the two snacks they would get, so snack time was very peaceful thanks to my husband's brilliant "you-get-what-you-get" snack tactic. I maintain from my many observations of kids that the #1 cause of **all** kid meltdowns is lack of food. That is free advice ☐

So then we sat at the table in the classroom, and it was time

for a coin tossing game. Everyone got a partner (including me – a well-behaved boy named Brandon, thank goodness), chose a side and each team flipped the coin – the person whose side was flipped answered the first question (something relating to the verse lesson and what was shown in the play during large group). The game continued with asking questions of each partner, and the kids began to have some fun with it and come up with silly answers. It was a fun game, but we finished and there were still at least 10 minutes until dismissal! Again, my husband saved the day, and rather than trying to look over the instructions for another game and potentially losing control of the classroom while we did that, he made up an activity, so we went around the table discussing our fears. And I've complimented him enough so far because he did an awesome job with the kids, but here's where it gets ugly – my husband chose this moment to share my fear of frogs with 14 little boys. If I were a regular teacher, I would be terrified and would probably move from my house and my hometown. But as a one-time substitute Sunday school teacher, I think I'm safe from any horrid pranks involving amphibians. So back to the game, according to their creativity, one boy's fear was of "cinderblocks", while a few of the students answered honestly that they were afraid of the dark. Quickly looking for our lesson plans to determine the next activity, we found them to be missing... "Avery" we said simultaneously, and like magic, there were the lesson plans, right in front of Avery's chair. But it was finally almost time to line up at the door for dismissal, and again, Hubby saved the day with another game – this one killed two birds with one stone by producing quiet AND spending time. The boys had to be quiet while my husband counted to 20 or else he would start over. We only had to reset twice, believe it or not! Once for (who else) Avery, and once for two other boys wrestling each other to the floor. And then it was over.

And then we got our beautiful oldest daughter back, and she is so good and obedient. And our other three, they were happy to

see us as well, and us them, and things were going great until we pulled out of the parking lot and our 5-year-old noticed her older sister's new ring she had earned at church... and so began the fighting. And the making up. And the familial bonding which involves a beautiful process that also makes me want to tear my hair out at times.

I am looking forward to volunteering in Kid's Kingdom again. But maybe next time, changing diapers for an hour would be easier!

My Favorite Camping Memory

If you've been reading my blog as of late, you know about my family's impromptu camping trip – my husband and I, in a fit of outlandish spontaneity (read: **his** idea), decided to take our 4 children – ages 9, 5, 2, and almost 1 year – on a surprise, last-minute, week-long camping trip. Despite our family being very inexperienced and mostly camping-inept, it's been going pretty well! My husband was shipped off to camp for entire summers when he was a kid, and it's fun to see this side of him – the skills that he learned in the campgrounds of his youth since we've never been camping together... well, not like this anyway, with 4 kids and 2 dogs to look after. As for me, the camping experiences of my youth consist of a few over-nighters for Girl Scouts, and one week-long venture at Girl Scout camp that I did not like one bit – it was cold, we had to get up early, I had to be away from my beloved family dog, which made me incredibly homesick. To top off my week of misery, the counselors at the camp wanted us to do a *mandatory* (believe me, I did ask about the mandatory part!) art project that involved catching frogs, dipping them in paint, and letting them hop across a piece of paper. Call it art, if you

will, but there was no way I was going to be anywhere near that art project due to my intense fear of frogs and toads which I am still conquering as we speak (guess what my 5-year-old's favorite camping activity has been this week?). Luckily for the kid-version of me, it rained at Girl Scout camp, meaning I did not have to participate in the frog-filled art project. But it took 3 days for that project to get canceled, and I was panicked about it the entire time. Plus, when we got up in the morning, it was very cold outside, and first things first – we had our swimming lessons first thing in the morning. Anyone who was too cold to participate in the morning lessons lost their privilege to partake in free swim after lunch when the sun was scorching. But as miserable as I thought I was at camp, I did have a favorite camping thing that we did – something that just isn't the same without a campfire: we made pie-iron pizzas.

A pie-iron is a camping cooking utensil that consists of two small, shallow metal square pans with long handles. You can build sandwiches and desserts and all kind of culinary creations between the squares, then you latch them together and hold them over the campfire to cook the filling. My long-term memory continues to serve me well – even as an adult, pie-iron pizzas are delicious! After a trying day yesterday with my girls being tired and throwing tantrums all day, making pie-iron pizzas was a great way to close the day – they honestly cheered everyone up, including me! Not only are they yummy, but to make them is actually a fun project that is easy for kids and can easily burn a good 30 minutes of off kid boredom time! The kids might need help cooking their pie-iron pizzas over the campfire for safety reasons, but any age kid can enjoy preparing her pizza for cooking. There is something about kids helping to prepare their own food that makes them eat better than ever, too – works every time for my kids.

So yeah – the \$10.99 pie-iron turned out to be a great investment. Not only was it a fun family experience (I built

the sandwiches with the girls while Dad helped cook them over the fire) which also accomplished the task of feeding the family, but the activity accomplished the near-impossible task of cheering up a tired family! I am excited about the [many experiments](#) I plan on conducting with the pie-iron – you can make mini-casseroles, desserts, pita pockets, stir fry... so many possibilities!

As I cheesily began to sing the other night, “Pizza... Roasting on an open fire...”

Blogging Break

I don't know what's happened to me lately. For over a year, I was pretty diligent about publishing my 5 blog posts per week, one for every weekday. Sometimes I did more, sometimes less, but rarely as few as I've been writing lately. I figured that if I were to lose enthusiasm for this blogging thing, it would have happened already and I'd be done with it. But that's not the case. I've stuck through it while being pregnant (of course it was easy to sit on my pregnant butt in the summer heat last year and blog – didn't want to do much else!), and I even caught up after having the emergency surgery and the recuperation period associated with that, also while caring for a new baby and 3 older kids. And I also caught up after spending a week in Florida with no blogging! So yes, it's something I enjoy, and something I'm going to stick to. I think I'm just going to back off a little bit for now and not publish quite as many posts as before. I still have a lot to say, and a lot of things with which to bore my readers, so have no fear!

But the weather is nice, and I have 4 kids to deliver to

places around town constantly. We've had to recently make some sacrifices – I always wanted to give my kids the opportunity to be in every activity they wanted, but I'm finding out that it's just not possible with 4 kids. My oldest is in Girl Scouts, and she also wants to take piano lessons, swimming lessons, be in 4-H and be in plays. Our very-soon-to-be 5-year-old is old enough for Safety Town class this year, and we kind of wanted to get her involved with swimming lessons also. Not to mention all of the projects that Mom and Dad have volunteered to do; the list seems endless. I think our summer is jam-packed already and it's only May! Plus, we've embarked on some rather large home improvement projects that need finishing...

So don't wonder where I am or if everything's ok – it's GREAT to be Über-Busy!

The Mayor And The Macarena – Part Deux

About a year ago, I had a blog post called "The Mayor And The Macarena". It was about my family's first roller skating outing (it was a birthday party for the Girl Scouts organization), and my post was so titled because our county's only roller skating rink is owned and operated by the town mayor. Not quite being fully assimilated to small town living, I guess, I got a big kick out of watching the mayor play DJ; especially when he spun old has-been but essential tunes for us to dance to on our roller skates like "The Macarena", "YMCA", "The Chicken Dance", and "The Hokey Pokey". So it's that time of year again – Happy Birthday Girl Scouts! – and we attended the birthday party at the roller

rink again on Sunday. That reminds me, did you know that the infamous chicken dance now has lyrics?

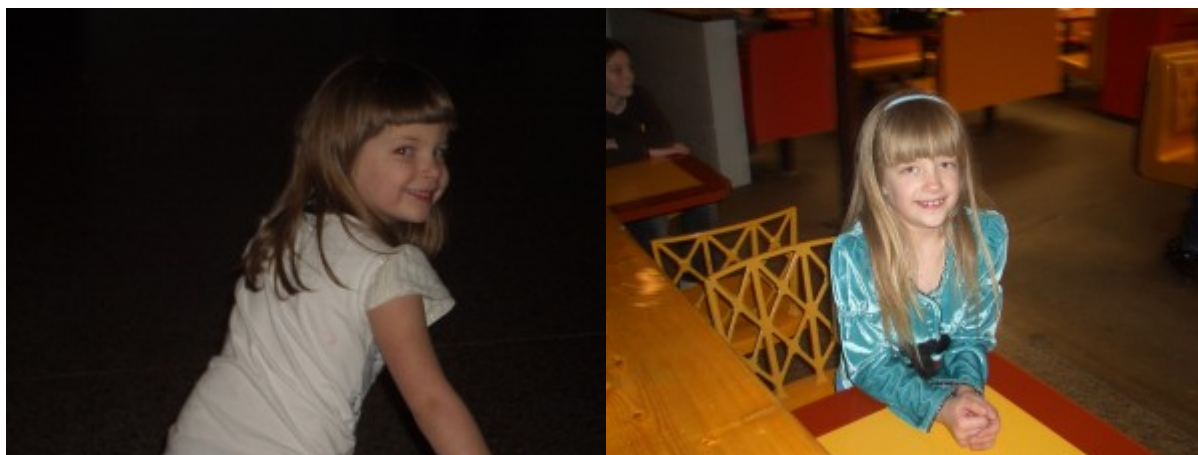
“I don’t wanna be a chick,
I don’t wanna be a duck,
I just wanna shake my butt”
CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP

Well, that was news to me because as far as I knew, the chicken dance was just that – a dance with motions and no lyrics, but I bet you can guess which word the kids absolutely LOVED putting the emphasis upon... ah, kids!

Coincidentally, our Girl Scout’s younger sister was also invited to a birthday party at the roller rink on Sunday. Which meant 5 straight hours of roller skating! After 5 hours, the girls had showed so much improvement! We even got skates for our 2-year-old, but those skates were practically bigger than she was, and they were so heavy, she didn’t have a chance:



But like I said, after a few hours on the skating floor, the older two really got the hang of it, despite a few spills and some breaks, err, rest periods, not broken bones, thank goodness!



The girls' baby brother even had a great time singing and bopping along with the music...



A great way to cap off an extremely busy weekend... we had so much fun, I think we'll make a few more trips over there even *before* the Scout's party comes around again next year!

Trickle-Down Crabonomics

Sunday is usually my favorite day of the week, but our last one ranks low on a list of my favorites. First, the kids started out the day by being terrible. Our 4-year-old Sammie was excited to see the snow – all 20 flakes of it that fell that morning – and she asked her still-half-asleep parents if we could go sledding. My husband groggily mumbled yes,

apparently thinking she was saying something else. Later when we were up and about, I told him what he had agreed to, and so we then had to find something else comparable in my daughter's mind to sledding. Giving them an outside toy, we bundled the 3 oldest kids and sent them outside, the oldest of whom wanted to stay inside – which began *her* downward spiral. She went outside reluctantly, but as soon as she came in, she threw a major tantrum about who-knows-what. This set off the other two – our toddler was upset because her almost-9-year-old sister was acting totally out of her mind, and our 4-year-old... well, I guess it's just that she never misses an opportunity to act like a nut. My husband dryly called it "Trickle-Down Crabonomics", which I find the perfect term to describe the volatile cause-and-effect relationship between siblings in a large family.

Somehow, we were ready to leave the house for our favorite Sunday brunch, and we were only 7 minutes past schedule, not bad. The kids cheered up in the car, and they were good during the entire meal, but unfortunately, I can't say the same for the quality of the food. It seems our favorite brunch has gone down a few steps in quality, to say the least. They used to feature an all-you-can-eat brunch buffet with delicious selections that varied from the usual scrambled eggs and bacon usually featured at these things. They even had a little table with chicken nuggets, peanut butter and jelly, and pizza for the kids. They had a make-your-own-omlette bar, which had a variety of ingredients, from spinach and feta cheese to onion and green peppers. Our favorite was the pasta bar – the chef makes fresh pasta right in front of you, and the alfredo is simply delicious – something even all the kids agreed upon. We've been visiting this brunch for about a year now, and slowly over time, there's been a downgrade in quality. At first it wasn't that noticeable – cloth napkins going to paper, the end of the kids' table, little things here and there. But now, it's down to a line of silver servers containing things like scrambled eggs, bacon,

biscuits and gravy and a make-your-own omelet bar with about 4 ingredients: one kind of cheese, bacon, mushrooms, salsa. No more onion, no spinach, no feta... and certainly no pasta bar, our favorite part. And I never even got to try the marinara. Well, anyway, that's enough about that – another victim of this economy, I guess. I know their menu is based upon the number of reservations they get, so maybe if the reservations somehow increase, so will the quality of the food again.

So after the disappointing buffet – which usually means I don't have to worry about cooking the rest of the day since we're all so full, this was not the case today – it was time to watch one of the biggest Chicago Bears games in recent years. It was for first place and against their rivals, the Green Bay Packers. The Packers scored more than 12 times as many points as the Bears did, and my kids weren't very good during the game, so it was difficult for their father to even watch the slaughter. Our 2-year-old fell asleep early, which we thought was a good thing, but she was woken up by her oldest sister during the battle we had about her cleaning the bathroom that was trashed during the sleepover she had had Friday night. So now we had a late-napping toddler, and we spent the rest of the day fighting about the bathroom with our oldest. Next thing I know, it's time for bed for everyone, and we never even got any parent-alone-time, ugh.

Oh, well, just because the day wasn't all I was looking forward to still doesn't make it a "bad day". It was a weekend, which means family day, and I don't think those could ever be bad... not like yesterday when I got to Walmart, unloaded two little kids, did some shopping and realized I forgot my credit card. Had to set my stuff aside, bundle up the kids and go out to the car, but it wasn't there either – it was at home. So after re-loading the kids, going home, and re-unloading the kids at Walmart, I was more than a little irritated, not to mention *extremely* rushed now because I had

to get to the school to pick up my oldest. So no, I didn't get all the shopping done, I was late to pick up my daughter, but at least I got her to Brownies on time. Then I went to my meeting for 20 minutes, then left for a Brownie patches ceremony, then back to my meeting, kid in tow... it was a hectic day, and I'm glad today is date night so I can spend some quality time alone with my husband and unwind. Only problem there is that no housework gets done on date night, so big surprise, I'm behind yet again, sigh... But then again, you probably guessed that based upon my lack of blog posting!

Why I Loathe School Fundraisers

It's that time of year again – back to school already! For the most part, this means good news for me as it clears out half of the foot traffic around here during the day. And since my oldest 2 are school-age and also the ones who are constantly misbehaving lately – Whoo Hoo for back to school time!

But back to school season also means it's time for school fundraisers, and my oldest daughter brought one home on the *second* day of school! They really couldn't wait until the second week of school at least? Because of how busy we've been around here between the new baby, my husband being in a play and his health scare, I set the fundraiser order form aside until the night before it was due when I reluctantly sent out an email seeking fundraiser participants. We actually did pretty well; better than I thought, actually, so I have to thank those of you who ordered stuff. But I have to come clean and say I did not order anything from my own

daughter's school fundraiser. I just could not find anything I needed or even wanted for quadruple what it *should* cost.

My nephew sent me an email about a week later seeking participants for his first school fundraiser, so for him I was a little more motivated to order something. Since the kids get credit for the number of items they get people to order versus how much is spent, I started looking for something inexpensive I could order. I began by trying to think of any gifts we might need for people sometime soon. No luck – we have a basement full of stuff my husband got from overstocked wholesalers that is just waiting to be gifted away. Next I tried looking for a small kitchen gadget I could use, even if it was only once in a blue moon. I found a can strainer – a plastic disk with holes in it you put over cans to drain the water out. It was \$5 – outrageously expensive, of course, but I could justify it for my nephew's first attempts at fundraising for his school. This wasn't so hard, I thought as I clicked on the shopping cart to check out. Except that all of a sudden, I was spending \$11 instead of \$5. And there was a text box on the webpage that told me that \$2.20 of my order goes directly to his school. They were trying to make it sound like a good thing, but \$2.20 out of \$11? And I'm spending \$11 on a 4 inch piece of plastic with holes in it? It really is easy enough to just use the can lid to strain whatever is in the can – and now I couldn't even justify buying an over-priced item “for a good cause” since the school was only getting \$2 of my money! Ugh, back to shopping on the fundraiser's site...

Have you ever had to shop for something you didn't want? It's actually quite difficult. We had a similar experience after our new baby was born. Someone got him some clothes that were the wrong size, so we ended up with a bunch of Kohl's store credit. My husband and I spent almost 2 hours in the Kohl's trying to figure out what we wanted; it was really difficult for us. Kohl's is not our type of store – we love bargain

shopping, and even though it was “free” store credit we were spending, it was hard to justify their expensive prices on things we barely needed. We ended up with 2 candle warmers and an electric razor for my husband. He can grow a beard in a matter of days, and this razor cut his shaving time drastically. The candle warmers are pretty cool too – you put candles on them and still get the scent, but without the ‘something’s burning’ smell or the danger of the open flame – a must-have if you like candles and have 4 little kids running around. So anyway, where was I before the Kohl’s tangent?

Oh, yes, trying to shop for things you don’t need... Like I said, I could justify the \$5 for the can strainer, but when it climbed to \$11 (especially because only \$2 went to my nephew’s school), I had to explore other options. I considered a ‘dip kit’ for \$6, figuring I could use it at one of the many game nights we host – then it would double as a conversation piece as well – but shipping on every item was \$6. Since the dip instructions read, ‘just add mayonnaise and sour cream’, I couldn’t justify \$12 on a packet of powder, again with the school only getting a measly \$2. So anyway, over an hour later, I finally found a good solution – a magazine subscription. Sure, I was now spending \$15 instead of \$12, but there were no shipping fees which meant the school got \$8 of my money. With 4 kids I barely ever have enough time to read the daily newspaper, so I don’t really know what I’m going to do with all the *US News and World Report* magazines that will soon be piling up around here. But hey, my kids already have a subscription to *Highlights* and my husband’s not really into magazines, so what else was I supposed to do? The subscription to *Parents* magazine was actually cheaper, but as I’ve said many times before to people who try to borrow me books about parenting – at the end of a long day full of changing diapers, cleaning spills, refereeing fights, and serving meals for people to reject, the last thing I want to do to unwind is read about kids! So I figured I could maybe save time – instead of surfing the ‘net at night reading news

stories, I could bring my *US News and World Report* up to bed and start my reading time a little earlier so I don't stay up too late.

But the point of this long rambling blog is this: I hate school fundraisers. I hate asking people to spend their hard-earned money on them, I hate ordering from them, and I hate the way they're set up. Don't get me wrong – I was more than happy to order from my nephew, especially because it's his first one; I find that kind of cute. Nevermind that little voice in my head that says, "but he's only in *Kindergarten* and they're already making him sell things!" But lucky for me, my sister only has 2 kids. Can't say the same for us -our family's fundraiser victims will get hit up a whopping 4 times a year! Not only that, but when the kids are in different clubs and activities, those are also prime targets for fundraising opportunities. My daughter brought home a newsletter just today that said her Girl Scouts fundraiser will be starting in a few weeks... ugh, here we go again. So even if we don't have any more kids and say each of our kids is in only 1 club or activity that does a fundraiser (girl scouts does 2 if you include selling cookies) – that's now a minimum of 8 times per year I have to hit up my family and friends. And that 8 times a year will probably all be overlapping in the autumn months! It is my hope to someday be able to put aside enough time to attend the PT0 meetings and urge the implementation of a new fundraising system – one where not so much money is wasted on the company that is hired to actually do the fundraiser. Until then, maybe I will just buy stock in one of these fundraising companies that are preying on our children's schools... in a struggling economy, something tells me that is one type of business that isn't hurting!

Blankie Woes

I think 8 is too old for a blankie. I mean, it's ok to have one at that age, but only if it doesn't interfere with daily life. On February 19, I made a post in my blog about the same subject – the post is called Blankies. It's funny to read that post now and see how far we've come, yet we've also gone no where on this issue at the same time. My 8-year-old daughter has this raggedy blankie that goes everywhere with her... well, that's not accurate – it would if it could, but I put the kabosh on that long ago. It got so bad that if we didn't remember it to go out to eat or walmart or somewhere simple like that, the whole family would pay the price. So, probably about a year ago now, I said, that's it, blankie stays home. I got tired of the liability involved also. If we brought it to a restaurant or anywhere for that matter and it got dirty, I would have to wash it immediately when we got home or else it wouldn't be ready for bed time that night, and my daughter would put up a huge fuss. Now it's gotten to the point where I'm worried it won't make it through the wash in one piece. Heck, it's barely in one piece as it is.

A few weeks ago, I said, it's time for the blankie to stay upstairs. It's only for bed and that's it. My daughter would bring it down in the morning, then she'd leave for school all day, and I got tired of tripping over it while doing housework. She hasn't been listening to that rule very well... and old habits die hard, I guess. The other day, she brought it downstairs and left it on the couch where little sister came and sat on it. Problem was, little sister had just wet the bed, so needless to say, blankie needed a wash. Somehow, I did not find out about this until bedtime that night, when a huge fuss was made about blankie not being available for bedtime. I was not about to do a load of laundry at 10 at night, especially on a Sunday, which is technically (though it never works out this way with a family of 5 almost 6 and 3 of

them little kids), my day off laundry. Not only that, but the blankie would not have been ready for at least an hour anyway, and it was already bedtime. There was much struggle and lots of tears, but she did finally spend a night without her beloved blankie. And guess what? She survived unscathed!

A few weeks ago, she had a sleepover for girl scouts. The rules were, bring a sleeping bag or a blanket, so she planned on bringing her blankie, which is holey, threadbare, and of no use when it comes to keeping someone warm. Not only that, but she is at a good age for kids to start making fun of her for something like that, and both my husband and I know from experience that kids do not forget things easily! She has a really nice sleeping bag that she's never actually gotten to use at a sleepover yet, so we convinced her to just bring that... or so we thought. She packed her own overnight bag, and I didn't think to check for contraband. The next day when I unpacked the overnight bag, I found the stowaway blankie. I felt so duped.

Ironically, as I'm writing this very post, my husband came downstairs and said, "Taylor can't find her blankie. She is really upset about it and crying." It was downstairs today, even though it wasn't supposed to be, so I know I had to add it to my huge load of laundry to bring upstairs... I told him to pass the message to Taylor that if I find it down here again, it will be gone forever because I am so sick of the whole situation. And I haven't done anything with it yet, honest, tempting as it may be. Don't get me wrong, I'm not mean or cruel, and I don't have a problem with kids needing a comfort item, even at 8. But when that item interferes with daily life, and one cannot function without it, then I believe it's time for a change. She should hope Dad or I don't find the blankie first – we are pretty fed up with the situation and cannot guarantee the safety of the blankie should we come across it!